

serious drops to lower levels than a previous plateau. This is why we propose the payments out of the fund will be made in each year when the total receipts from those six principal grains in the prairie region fall below the previous five year average.

Now, I may rush to say that in any year where it is exactly 99 per cent, or closer to 100 per cent than that—

Mr. Korchinski: Dabbling in decimals.

Mr. Lang: —it is proposed that no payment be made. But in any year when the gross receipts are below 99 per cent, a payment will be made out of the fund to bring the producers' gross receipts up to 100 per cent of the average of the previous five years' gross receipts.

Mr. Korchinski: Dabbling in decimals.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister should be allowed to make his speech, and it seems to the Chair it would be difficult for him to make his speech with this kind of interruption.

Mr. Lang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The five year average was selected essentially as a measure of a recent record of grain receipts in the prairie region. There is no particular magic about a five-year figure, but it seems to me to be the best judgment between taking too short a period, in which case the ups and downs might be too severe, or taking too long a period, in which case the earlier years, which on the whole tend to be lower years in total grain receipts and would have too much adverse effect on the basis on which we operate.

● (12:20 p.m.)

The payments out to producers are proposed to be made on the basis of the producer's own recent participation in the market, that is to say, the payments out are to be made to producers basically in proportion to their recent share of the market. Again, as a judgment on what that recent share is, we propose after the fund has been operated for three years, to use the current year and the two preceding years as the best guide to what recent marketings are. We chose the three-year figure as a balance between taking the current year figure as the most accurate reflection in one sense of a person's place in the market, which could have many ups and downs, and a longer period than three years which might have carried forward into the scheme too many factors which no longer exist in his producing picture.

We did not want to add a factor which would in any way discourage the need for a farmer to make the best possible decision about what to plant, about how to farm, in order to maximize in an ordinary year his marketing opportunities. Initially, we propose to put into the plan the \$15,000 limit. This is referred to in the bill in terms of a figure which ordinarily will maintain within the plan approximately 90 per cent of the total receipts in the prairie region. It is anticipated that as need arises, the \$15,000 limit which will be proposed for the first year will be adjusted to keep approximately 90 per cent of the total receipts within the plan.

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

Essentially, what we are saying to them is that those grain receipts produced by farmers on farms larger than a \$15,000 delivery need not attract the treasury support which is contained in the stabilization plan. In other words, we are really saying that while we are delighted to see the treasury money, government money, going to the assistance of the income levels of farmers up to a certain size, and even to the operators of large farms up to that size, we do not propose that that same government money should go in a way which might encourage the farmers to grow more than may be required from the point of view from a basic, effective and efficient operation.

This leads me to say how much this emphasizes this government's real belief in the desirability of maintaining farming as a viable and effective way of life. It is very true that it is our belief that we should try to assure that the total system, where the government has any control, should be made as effective as possible to maximize returns to those involved in farming. I want to state, as a fundamental matter of our philosophy, that we do not in any way have the view that anyone should be made to move off a farm if he chooses to live on it. I want to state that most categorically, and I hope all members opposite will remember this firm statement of our view. The decision about how many people want to farm is essentially to be made by the people involved in farming.

I think it important and I urge hon. members opposite to give up their constant reference to some malicious intention on the part of the government.

An hon. Member: That is pretty cheap politics.

Mr. Lang: I urge them to give this up because, not only is it cheap politics as my colleague says, but it is calculated to increase the despair and hopelessness in any group of farmers who know what their difficulties are well enough. I urge the opposition to recognize, as we do, that we should try to offer alternatives and opportunities to farmers in difficulty. We must offer to those who want to stay with farming the means to become more viable if their units are too small or where their need is for capital investment in order to diversify. We must also offer to those who want to leave farming, decent opportunities and information about what may be available elsewhere. I want to emphasize to hon. members, and the people of Canada, our belief that the men and women who want to continue to live on farms and raise their families there will do so with our assistance to make them more effective and efficient and with our assistance to put the whole matter of handling and transportation as well as the rest of the system as it pertains to them into the best possible shape.

In the bill before us there is a section dealing with a transitional payment which is related to the fact that in this Act we are proposing the repeal, for this crop year, the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act and the government's obligation under it and the fact that the stabilization fund is not yet in effect. In our earliest proposals there was the implication that we might try to treat this